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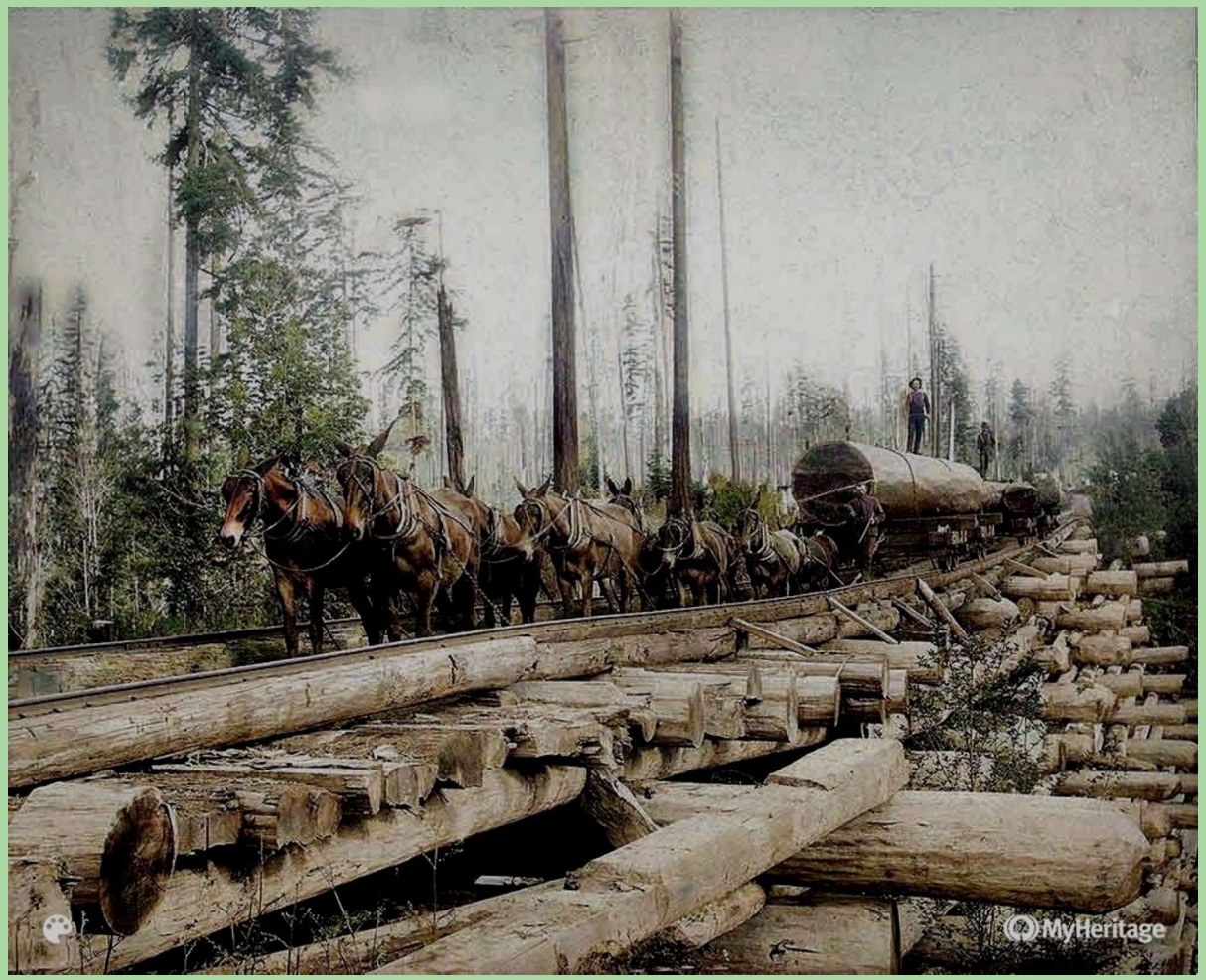

The Big Four of Thurston County

Threads of Truth: The Henry Colter Affair **$5.00**

THURSTON COUNTY HISTORICAL JOURNAL

The *Thurston County Historical Journal* is dedicated to recording and celebrating the history of Thurston County.
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The Journal *welcomes factual articles dealing with any aspect of Thurston County history. Please contact the editor before submitting an article to determine its suitability for publication. Articles on previously unexplored topics, new interpretations of well-known topics, and personal recollections are preferred. Articles may range in length from 100 words to 10,000 words, and should include source notes and suggested illustrations.*

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Table of Contents

2 The Big Four of Thurston County
James S. Hannum, M.D.

25 Threads of Truth: The Henry Colter Affair
Karen L. Johnson

Back Cover
Who/What/Where Is It?

On the cover: *Bridge on the Ellis Cove tram railway, near South Bay, circa 1885. Photograph C1986.8.7, courtesy of Washington State Historical Museum.*

See related article on page 2.

The Big Four of Thurston County

James S. Hannum, M.D.

Most people familiar with the history of 19th Century California have heard of that state's Big Four. All were merchants who migrated to the Golden State from the East during the early days of the Gold Rush. Collis P. Huntington, Leland Stanford, Mark Hopkins, and Charles Crocker had already prospered in the 1860s when they associated with each other while building the Central Pacific Railroad.

A few decades later and on a much smaller scale, Thurston County also had a group of four businessmen who were pioneers in constructing railroads within that county. Although they were never formally designated as the "Big Four," their achievements could well qualify them for that accolade. They were George H. Foster, Isaac Chase "Ike" Ellis, Amos Brown, and Benjamin Buckman Turner. The relationships among them were complex.

George H. Foster

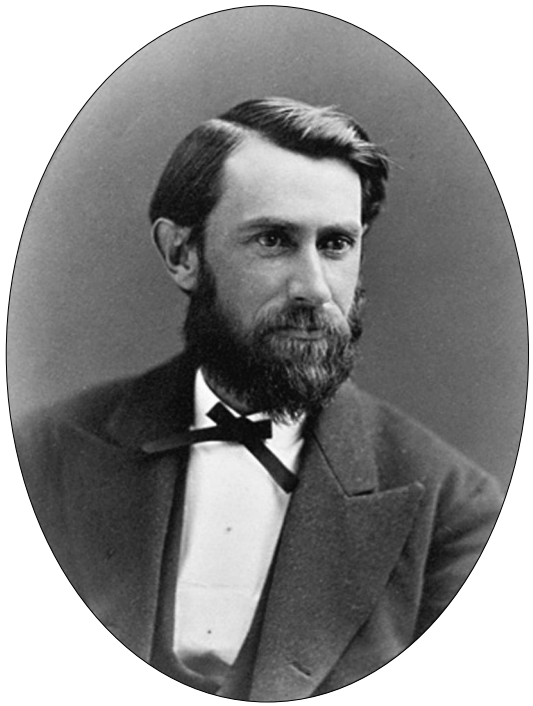
Foster was an Olympia businessman who was involved in the construction and operation of three Thurston County logging railroads. The first was tributary to a terminal where logs were dumped into Ellis Cove; the second was located along Percival Creek; and the third interchanged logging cars with the Olympia & Chehalis Valley Railroad at Bush Prairie. All these lines existed in the 1880s.

Foster was born in New Hampshire about 1841 and was living with his parents, Amos H. and Sarah Foster, in Lowell, Massachusetts in 1860.[1] That year, his future bride, Lydia J. Laberee, also resided in Lowell. Lydia worked in a mill there, after emigrating from Compton County, Quebec, Canada. By 1870, George had relocated to Olympia.[2] He travelled east and married Lydia at Eaton (east of Sherbrooke), in Compton County on December 14, 1871.[3] The same day, the couple departed for Olympia from Lennoxville, a borough of Sherbrooke. In 1880, George and Lydia resided in Olympia on Main Street (now called Capitol Way) between what is now Legion Way and 7th Avenue.[4] Lydia passed away in 1888 and George then married Mamie Henry. That union ended in divorce and George H. Foster died at Tenino December 8, 1903.[5]

Ike Ellis

Ike Ellis was born in Maine in 1832. Ellis' obituary was printed in the June 9, 1910 *Olympia Daily Recorder*. It notes that he came to Washington Territory in 1854 and died at his Olympia home at 609 Main Street. "He

logged for the old Yesler mill in Seattle and through his logging operations at one time owned the townsite of what is now West Seattle. . . . Mr. Ellis retired from active work in the late 80s and invested heavily in Olympia. At a cost of $50,000 he built the Lacey race track, which proved a heavy financial loss. He suffered other financial reverses in the 90s along with many other Olympians. . . . In the early eighties Mr. Ellis was mayor of the town of Olympia and served two terms as a member of the city council. . . . Mr. Ellis is survived by a wife and two children. He was married before coming to Olympia, but was divorced from his first wife. Twenty-two years ago he was married again to Miss Eva Toellmer of this city. His daughter, Mrs. Cora (J.) Ayers, resides at Plum Station and his son, Hiram J. Ellis, is in Seattle."[6]



Isaac Chase "Ike" Ellis, taken between 1860 and 1880. Photograph C2018.0.10, courtesy of Washington State Historical Society.

Amos Brown

Amos Brown was born at Bristol, in Grafton County, New Hampshire July 29, 1833. The September 1899 issue of *The Washington Historian* reports that he arrived in Port Gamble, Washington in 1859 and later moved to Olympia. He died in San Francisco on April 8, 1899.[7]

Brown was an early investor in undeveloped Seattle real estate, which proved to be the basis of his fortune. He resided there in 1870.[8] He and his partners built the old Occidental Hotel in that city. By 1880, Brown and his family had relocated to Olympia. They lived on Main Street (now called Capitol Way) between what now is 5th Avenue and Legion Way. Brown's occupation was said to be "logger."[9]

Benjamin Turner

Benjamin B. Turner was born December 13, 1840 at Columbia Falls, Maine[10] and came to Olympia in 1870. He was married to Oretta Young. After 1896, his permanent residence was at Woodard Point[11] (now part of Thurston County's Woodard Point Park). Turner had done some of his early logging there, in the area of South Bay, using traditional methods. He must have been a fairly rough character, for Oret-

Ben Turner (seated on the far left) at his house on Woodard Bay. Photograph from the Ben Turner Collection, 1993-017, courtesy of Lacey Museum.

ta sued him for divorce in July 1889.[12] She alleged drunkenness, bad temper, and vulgarity. However, the divorce was not granted. *South Bay: Its History & Its People* reports that Turner and his wife Retta moved to the area of Woodard Bay in 1896, after Turner lost everything in the "Panic of 1893." Ben Turner passed away January 22, 1923.

The business affairs of these four men had numerous intersections. Sometimes they worked together harmoniously. At other times, their interests diverged and they were competitors. In addition, all of them had extensive dealings with two large, non-Thurston County companies, the Port Blakely Mill Company and the Tacoma Mill Company.

These relationships will be illustrated by examining the roles Foster, Ellis,

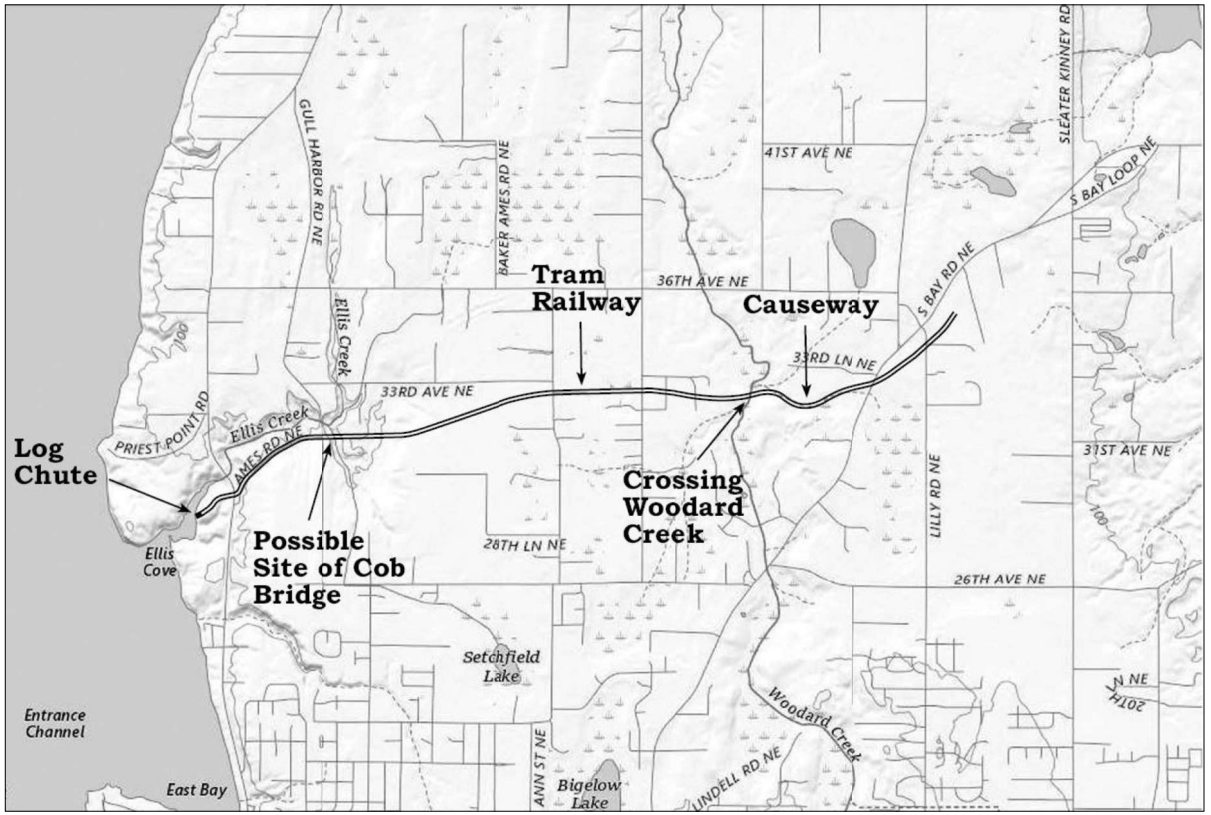


Figure 1. Route map of the tram railway terminating at Ellis Cove. Base map from the U.S. Geological Survey (https://apps.nationalmap.gov/viewer/ : accessed February 24, 2020). Image by the author.

Brown, and Turner played in the history of five separate Thurston County logging railroads. The order in which these lines will be described is not always chronological. The first line was a tram railway that dumped logs at Ellis Cove, where Priest Point Park is now located. The second was the Olympia & Mount Rainier Railroad, which connected Olympia's East Waterway with Chambers Lake. The third railroad, located along Percival Creek, linked West Olympia with the region near the present-day campus of South Puget Sound Community College. A fourth logging line connected to the Olympia & Chehalis Valley Railroad at Bush Prairie. Last to be described is the Black Lake & Sherman Valley Railroad. It extended the Percival Creek railroad farther southwest, to Black Lake.

THE ELLIS COVE TRAM RAILWAY

A map showing the exact course of the tram railway, which was used to dump logs at Ellis Cove, has not been located. Figure 1 is a map drawn by the author. It postulates the likely

path followed by the tram. However, conclusive proof for this route cannot be given. Foster, Ellis, and Brown were all involved in this venture. By 1874, Foster and Ellis, operating as Foster & Ellis, began buying forest land and timber rights in the region northeast of Olympia.[13] There, Ellis Cove and Ellis Creek took their names from one of the partners. It is unclear when logging started on those properties; possibly, the harvest commenced using a skid road (a road along which logs are skidded or hauled). Just when the tram railway was installed has not been determined.

A deed dated March 1, 1881 records that George H. Foster and Isaac Chase Ellis, doing business then as G. H. Foster & Company, sold to Amos Brown, for $14,000, all rights and titles to timber claims, camps, camp fixtures, teams, boom-chains, and franchises belonging to the logging business of G. H. Foster & Company, which operated on the east side of Budd Inlet. The property included 30 oxen, three horses, two double wagons and harness, two cars, boom chains, camp and camp fixtures. More specifically, the sale included all rights-of-way, franchises, privileges, and rights to cut timber and remove timber or logs that had been conveyed to Foster & Ellis from J. R. Patterson, George A. L. Agnew, D. R. and A. E. Bridges, Oscar M. Fuller, B. F. Corliss, George F. Whitworth, Jane Galiher, Marshall Blinn, Edmund Rogers, C. (Crowell) H. Sylvester, Thomas Prather, and John D. Judson. Although "two cars" are mentioned, the document does not specifically mention a railroad.[14]

In a separate document signed the same day and recorded March 4, 1881, Brown signed over his interest in the above mentioned real and personal property, franchises and rights-of-way, to the Port Blakely Mill Company.[15] Clearly, he was acting in some fashion as a broker for a transaction between Foster & Ellis and the mill company. Brown's apparent benefit in performing that function was clarified by an article that appears in the February 4, 1882 *Olympia Transcript*. It mentions that Brown was operating a 2.5-mile road "near the C.H. Sylvester place on South Bay Road, running logs to the bay." Cars were pulled by horses and donkeys.

On June 2, 1882, Amos Brown sold additional land, timber rights, and franchises in the area where the tram railway operated, to the Port Blakely Mill Company. Another document dated the same day seems to clarify the papers signed March 4, 1881. Therein, Brown reiterates the conveyance of several items to the Port Blakely Mill Company. But the list differs significantly in that it includes the tram railway: "44 oxen, 3 horses, sundry tools, buildings at the camp, roads, bridges, dam, railroad, 2 cars at camp, 1 car at Mud Bay, 2 wagons, supplies at camp, supplies in warehouse, at Olympia, feed and hay, chains, ropes, harness, saddles."[16]

Further insight into the nature of the tram railway is preserved at the Lacey Museum. The museum has docu-

Bridge on the Ellis Cove tram railway, near South Bay, circa 1885. Photograph C1986.8.7, courtesy of Washington State Historical Museum.

ments obtained by Denise Keegan at the time she recorded an oral history given by Elizabeth Ayer, who resided at Panorama City. Elizabeth was a granddaughter of Ike Ellis. The date of the interview is not recorded; the data was transcribed by Lanny Weaver. An undated and unidentified newspaper clipping was reviewed by Keegan and transcribed by Weaver: "How many Olympians, I wonder, have seen the 'cob-house' bridge which supports a section of I. C. Ellis' skid road? It is nearly a mile from the terminus of the road. Built of huge logs, grown white with age, it rises like a ghostly trestle, eighty feet from the bed of the ravine. The big trees, two or three feet in diameter, are laid criss-cross, precisely as children build houses with corn cobs, and completely fill the ravine from top to bottom and from side to side. One would hardly think that such a structure could settle or be crushed but it is so. Mule trains, laden with giants of the forest, daily passing over the eight-foot track, so depress it in the middle that at long intervals a new layer of logs must be added, and the track raised. Marks of the old roadways thus overlaid show the total depression during the fifteen years of its existence to have been five or six feet." This statement suggests that the article may have been published between 1890 and 1895.

A photograph in the collection of the Washington State Historical Society is identified: "Created ca. 1885," "South Bay, W. T."[17] It seems compatible with the "cob-bridge." Precisely where this image was made has not been established with certainty. One possible site is the place where the tram railway must have necessarily crossed Woodard Creek. That spot would have been relatively close to the South Bay community. On the other hand, the Elizabeth Ayer newspaper clipping suggests that the bridge was less than a mile from the terminal at Ellis Cove. If that is correct, then a logical site would be at a position immediately east of the intersection of Ames Road and Gull Harbor Road. There, the right-of-way would have crossed a deep ravine, which is occupied by a stream that empties into Ellis Creek.

There are several reasons why a precise location for the tram railway has been challenging to determine. It appears that little, if any, grading of the right-of-way was done. Few convincing telltale features can be found by reviewing available aerial photographs and modern LiDAR ground imaging. None of the maps consulted from that era show the line.

The right-of-way visible in Figure 1 seems plausible after reviewing a variety of facts. Figure 2 represents the properties controlled by operators of the tram railway. It is drawn on part of a 1909 map. That no right-of-way deeds were filed for the tram road (which would certainly assist in locating the grade) is partially explained by the fact that much of the land through which it passed was owned by the operators of the tram.

It is reasonable to suspect that any survey used for the tram road would have followed the shortest feasible

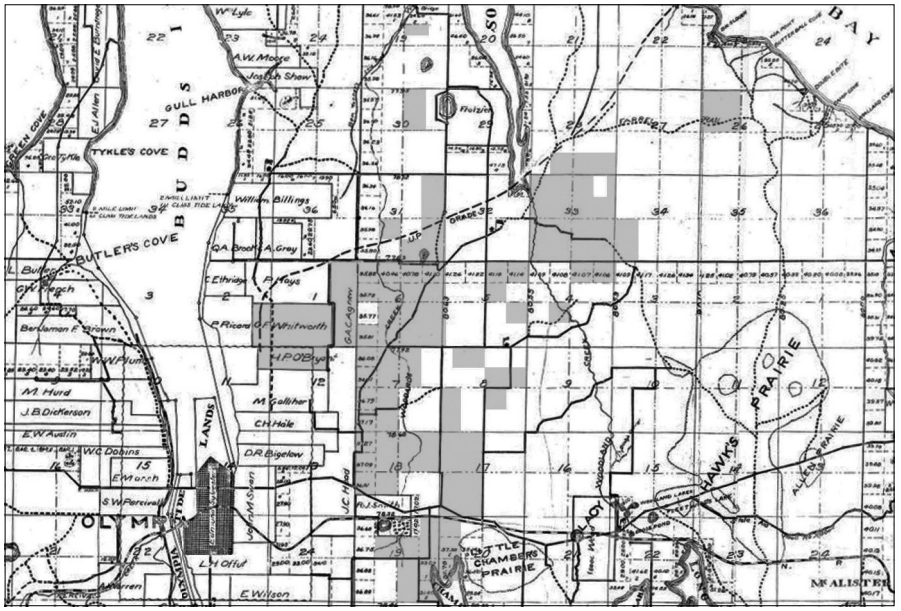


Figure 2. Timberland controlled by the Ellis Cove tram operators is shown as shaded areas over a 1909 base map, The County Engineer's New Road Map of Thurston County Washington.

route (regarding adverse grades) between the community of South Bay and Ellis Cove. It likely would have crossed Woodard Creek at a place where a bridge or trestle would be as short as possible.

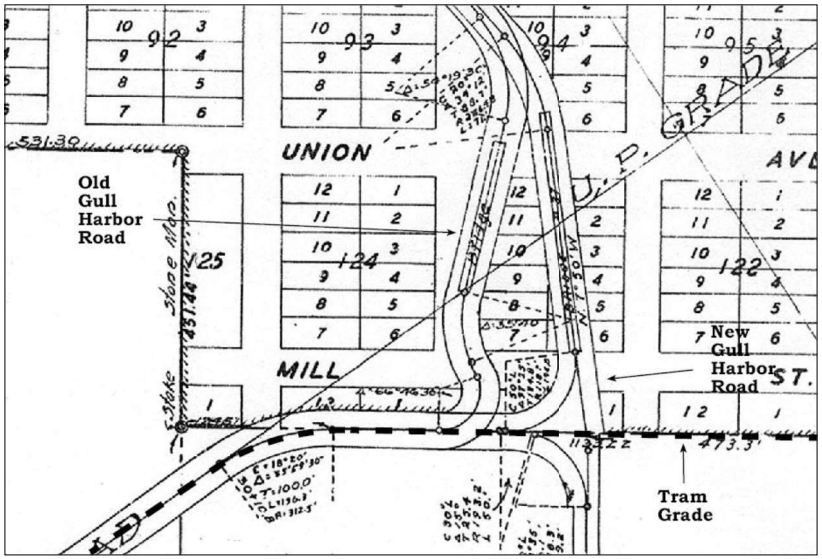


Figure 3. Survey of Ames Road courtesy of Thurston County Roads & Transportation Services.

Between Gull Harbor Road and East Bay Drive, near the western end of the line, it seems logical that the tram railway followed, in general, the path now occupied by Ames Road. About 1890, the Portland & Puget Sound Railroad located part of its surveyed (but unoperated) right-of-way there; that path was appropriated subsequently for construction of Ames Road. Figure 3 is part of a survey map archived at Thurston County Roads and Transportation Services. Visible is the intersection of Ames Road and Gull Harbor Road. Today, that intersection is approximately 100 feet east of its former location. The current Gull Harbor Road, at the intersection, appears to have been elevated when it was rebuilt and straightened. Immediately east of that intersection, a shelf is visible. It is at a significantly lower level than Gull Harbor Road. The shelf may represent the grade used by the tram.

West of East Bay Drive, the tram's right-of-way generally follows a trail in Priest Point Park. There, it traverses relatively flat terrain. That trail leads to a promontory overlooking Ellis Cove. The author's diagram displaying these features is presented in Figure 4 which is part of a map produced by the City of Olympia. From the promontory, a chute or incline must have been employed to transfer logs down to water level in the cove.

Near the east end of the line, in Section 6, Township 18 North, Range 1 West, a small length of likely grade can still be found as an elevated causeway across a wetland. The grade is located on private property immediately west of the residence at 3139 South Bay Road.

Shaded areas in Figure 2 identify timberland controlled by the tram operators. It is logical to question how timber from the southerly portion of these

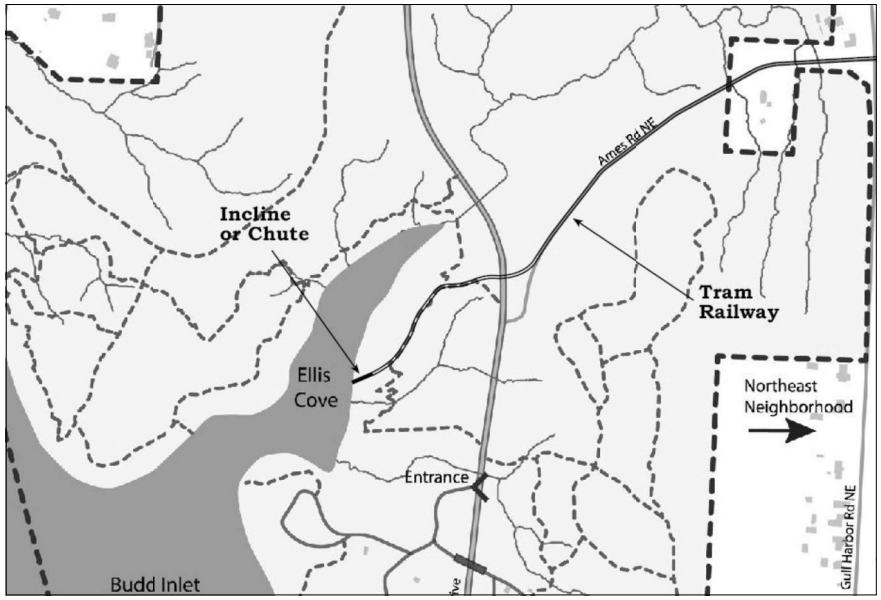


Figure 4. Author's diagram showing the tram railway within Priest Point Park. Base map from Thurston County Parks and Recreation Department (accessed April 20, 2021).

In 2021, Henry Hollweger stands on the west end of the causeway off South Bay Road. Hollweger provided a tour of the area. Photograph by author.

properties was transported to Ellis Cove. Timber deeds for the various parcels identified in the March 1, 1881 document (mentioned above) indicate that Woodard Creek was dammed, possibly in several locations. This allowed logs to be transported north by water, to the tram railway. Permission to erect dams was granted in the Crowell H. Sylvester Donation Claim[18] and farther south, in Section 17 of Township 18 North, Range 1 West.[19]

By the latter part of 1884, the timber tributary to the tram railway had mostly been exhausted. A September 17, 1884 document[20] reveals that, for $10,000, the Port Blakely Mill Company sold (back) to Ike Ellis the rights and title to everything related to a logging business near

Olympia. Those assets consisted of 44 oxen, three horses, sundry tools, buildings at the camp, roads, bridges, dam, railroad, two cars at the camp and one car at Mud Bay, two wagons, supplies at camp and in warehouse at Olympia, feed, hay, chains, ropes, harness, and saddles.

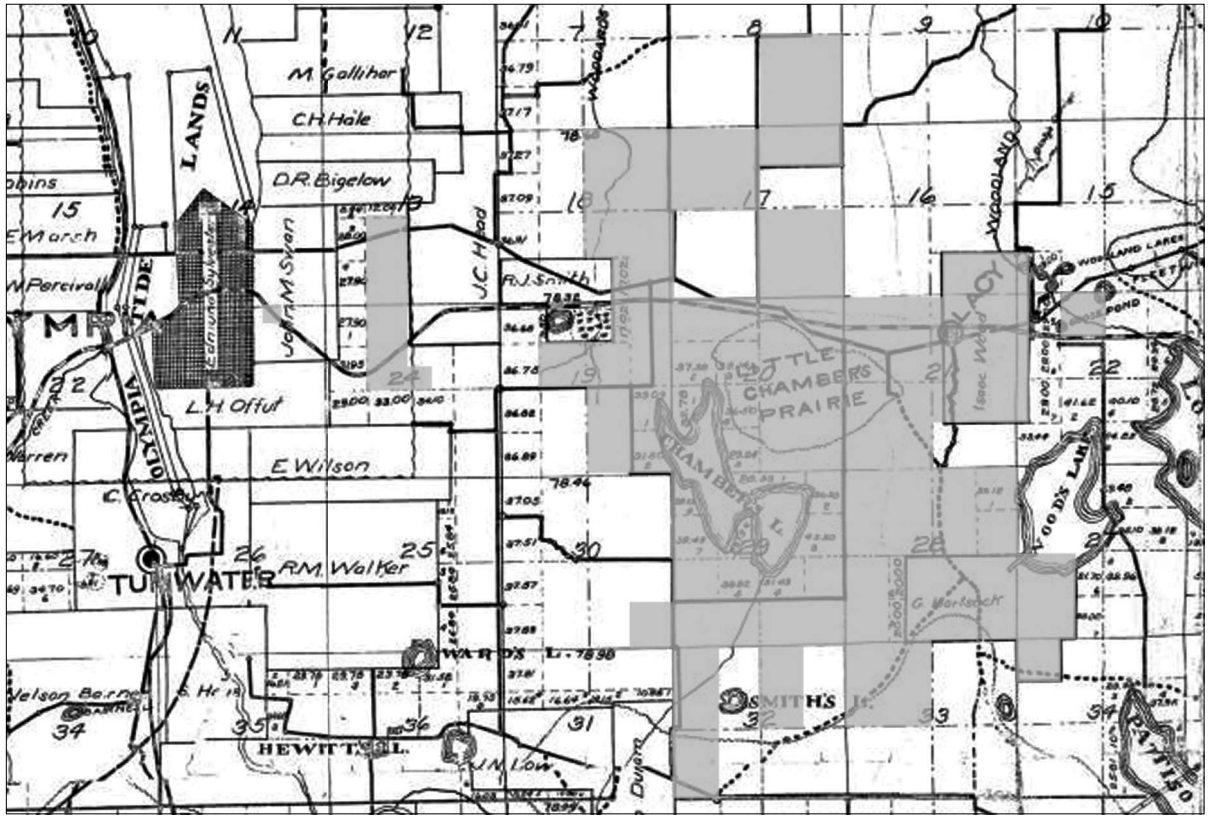
The Olympia & Mt. Rainier Railroad

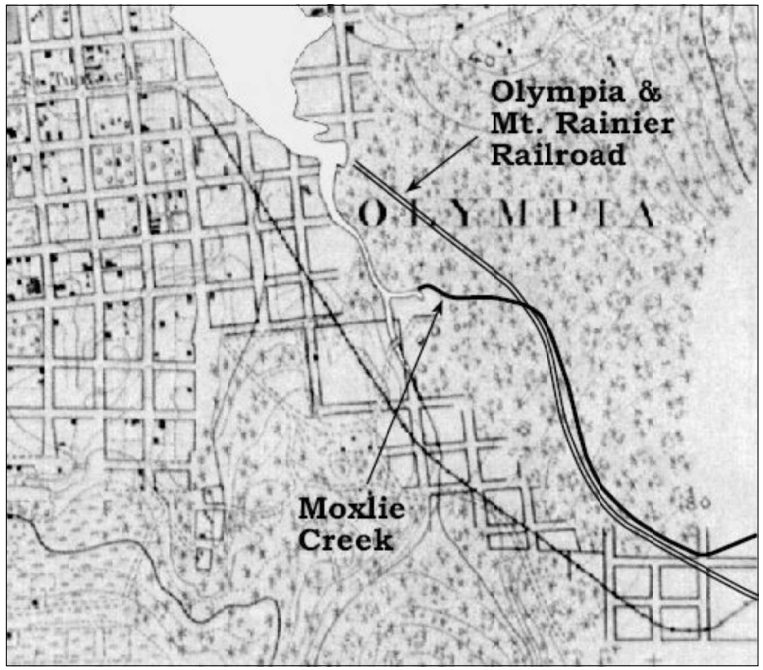
Ellis planned to use these assets for construction of his Olympia & Mt. Rainier Railroad. Ellis also acquired recycled track material from a tram railroad previously built by James McIntosh and subsequently owned by the Tacoma Mill Company.[21] That tram had been used to transport timber between Hewitt Lake and Tumwater. The terminal for McIntosh's tram had been on Budd Inlet, immediately north of the place where later, the first Olympia Brewery building would be constructed.[22]

Ellis began buying timberland, water impoundment rights, and rights-of-way for this new endeavor in 1883. On April 10, he was granted the right to flood most of the southeast quarter of Section 18, Township 18 North, Range 1 West.[23] Water would be impounded by a dam across a creek south of that property. A right-of-way for a part of his logging railroad was also granted through the south part of the designated parcel; it was supposed to reach a landing on the east side of the resulting pond. That grade would have travelled north from the area immediately northeast of today's Pacific Avenue interchange with Interstate 5.

In March 1884, Ellis bought Samuel Ward's wharf and warehouse near downtown Olympia.[24] Those properties were described in a deed as "abutting on Fourth Street [now Avenue] immediately on the east side of the channel, by the drawbridge and adjoining the wharf and warehouse of the said Ellis on the west." One right-of-way needed for construction of the Olympia & Mt. Rainier Railroad was leased May 28, 1884.[25] It allowed passage through several blocks of Swan's Addition to Olympia. Two additional leases were signed that same month. The first allowed the railroad to cross the William Ayers Donation Claim; the second permitted passage over what became, in 1889, Wilson's Addition to Olympia. After grading of the right-of-way began, it became necessary to lease another small parcel in Swan's Addition; thus, the northeast portion of Block 59 was secured in September 1884.[26]

The May 28, 1884 lease reveals that Ellis was not the first logger to use this newly secured right-of-way. In that document, James Pattison granted Ellis "a right-of-way upon and over that certain skid logging road built by Dan Varner, so far as the same runs over and through Blocks 51, 52 and 71 of Swan's Addition to the Town of Olympia." Previously, Varner had used the skid road to harvest timber in the Moxlie Donation Claim. Figure 5 displays the timberland controlled by Ellis and presumed to have been harvested via the Olympia & Mt. Rainier Railroad. Figure 6 shows the terminal of the line on the East Waterway as it appeared on an 1894 map of Olympia.





***Above**: Figure 5. Timberland accessed by the Olympia & Mt. Rainier Railroad is shaded over a 1909 base map,* The County Engineer's New Road Map of Thurston County Washington.

***Left**: Figure 6. East Waterway terminal of the Olympia & Mt. Rainier Railroad, data added by author. Base image from Olympia Harbor, Puget Sound, first published in 1876, this version published in June 1894; courtesy of Washington State Digital Archives.*

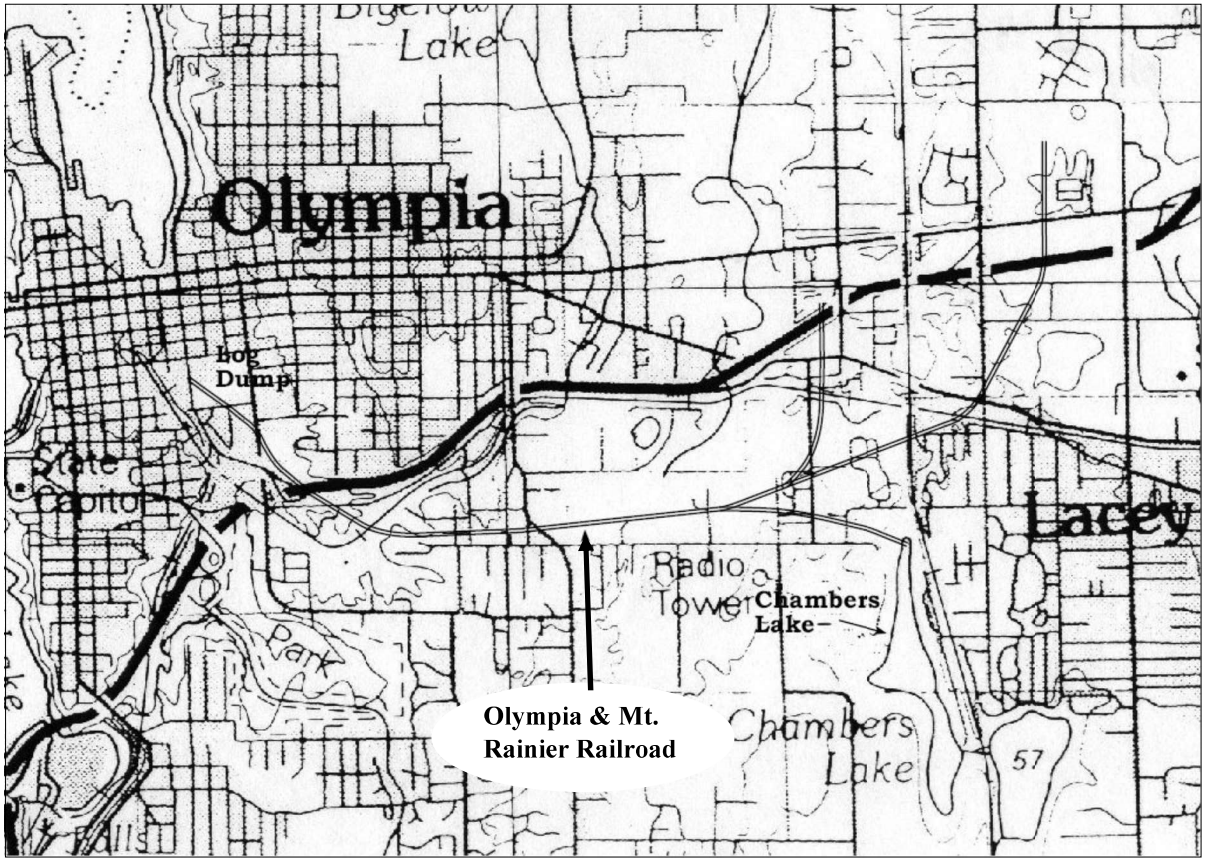


Figure 7. Author's route map of the Olympia & Mt. Rainier Railroad. Base map from U.S. Geological Survey Topographical Map of the Olympia Quadrangle.

Figure 7 is a map made by the author showing the entire railroad.

The Ayers interview mentioned above suggests that initially, the Olympia & Mt. Rainier Railroad was powered by oxen: "And he (Ellis) had this logging railroad that he built out to Chambers Lake and he ran the railroad right down into the lake. Then he floated the logs onto the cars and then pulled them out by oxen power and took them to the top of the hill and turned the cars loose down to the Union dump and [then] they hauled them back up [to Chamber's Lake]." This form of power is confirmed by an article in the June 12, 1885 *Tacoma News*: "I. Ellis, putting logs into the bay at Olympia, operates with cars drawn by mules and running on iron rails. He works about 50 men, and puts in some 55,000 feet daily. Logs come to Tacoma Mill Company." Mules continued to be used at Chambers Lake, as reported in the May 17, 1889 *Washington Standard*: "Quite a smashup occurred on Ellis' logging railroad on Thursday. A five-span

mule team was hauling two cars up the incline at Chambers Lake, when a coupling broke and back went the cars down into the lake, logs and all. One car was badly smashed and both sank in ten feet of water. The cars were fished out yesterday. No one was hurt."

The January 30, 1885 edition of the *Washington Standard* suggests that the railroad used a locomotive on at least some part of the line. "Mr. Ellis' railway logging camp is in full working order and every day the ears of our citizens are greeted by the blast from the locomotive whistle as the train comes thundering down the declivity to the mouth of Moxley's [*sic*] Creek, where, at high tide, the logs are rolled into the water." However, no other source has been found to confirm the use of such an engine. The 1888 edition of *The Official Railway List* lists the Olympia & Mt. Rainier Railroad with three miles of 97-inch gauge track. *Poor's Manual of Railroads*, Editions of 1889 and 1890, note that the railroad was operating eight miles of track using steel rails with a gauge of eight feet, one inch. It owned four log cars. A locomotive was not mentioned in any of those publications.

Logging Railroads of the West, by Kramer Adams, reports that the Olympia & Mt. Rainier Railroad operated until 1890. That year, the Northern Pacific Railroad constructed its line into Olympia. That right-of-way intersected the logging railroad at a significantly different grade. Ellis may not have had enough unharvested timber remaining to justify the cost of building a bridge over the new Northern Pacific line.

FOSTER'S PERCIVAL CREEK RAILROAD

Just when George H. Foster constructed his second Thurston County railroad, in the region of Percival Creek, is unclear. Figure 8 is the author's map presenting important features of that enterprise. The railroad deposited logs at a dump on the west side of Budd Inlet. Its southern terminal was at a place known as Camp #2, in the northeast quarter of the southeast quarter of Section 28, Township 18 North, Range 2 West. Of possible significance is the fact that Ben Turner had also contemplated logging in this area, for he had acquired that same property in 1881.[27] Foster was actively logging along Percival Creek on January 30, 1883, when he bought timber rights in the southwest quarter of Section 28.

In a deed recorded July 14, 1883, Foster transferred a large portfolio of assets to Charles Hanson, the owner of the Tacoma Mill Company. Included were Foster's Logging Camp #1 (at Bush Prairie) and Camp #2, which was also the place where logs were transferred to the Percival Creek line from a skid road belonging to Foster. The railroad was on the west side of Percival Creek, while the skid road terminated opposite the camp, on the east side of the creek. At Camp #2 were two rail cars for log transport and 2,000 ties. In addition, there were "1,000,000 board feet of saw logs in the water at Budd Inlet, opposite

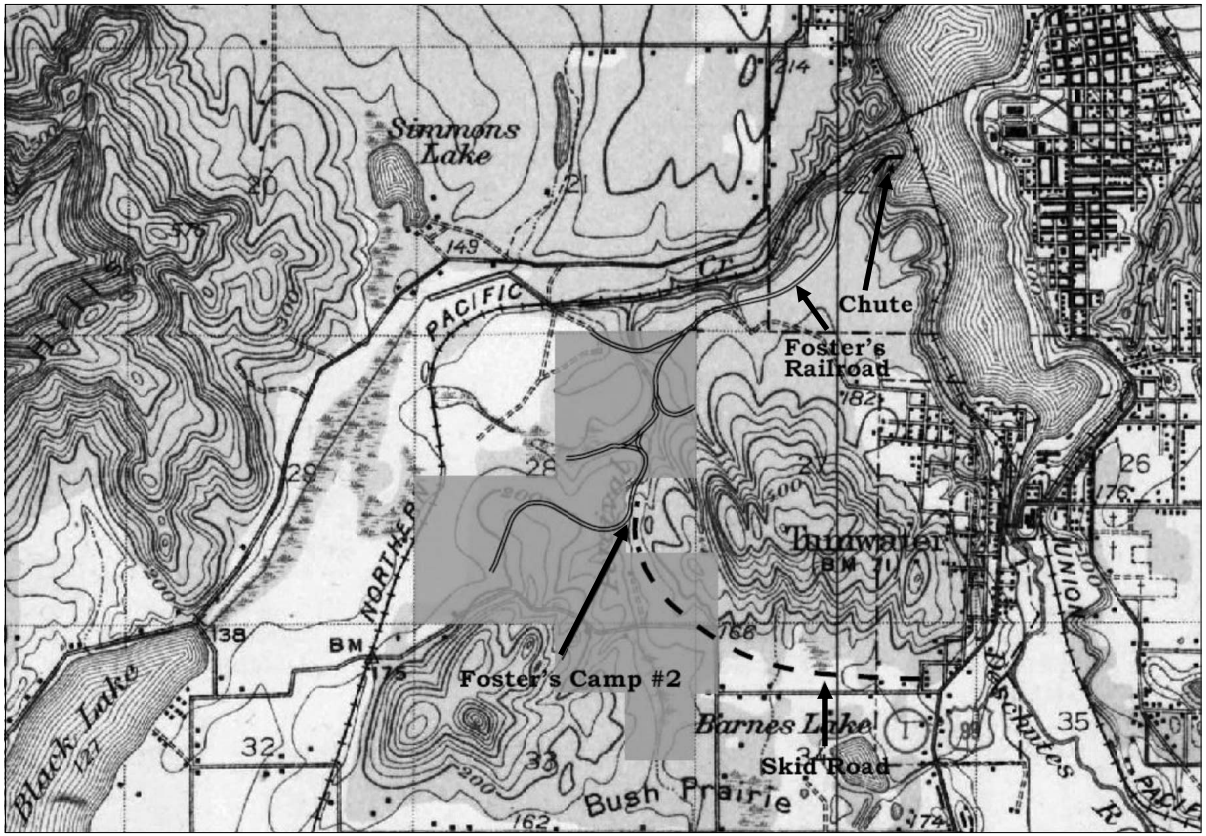


Figure 8. Author's map of Foster's Percival Creek Railroad. Base map from U.S. Geological Survey Topographical Map of the Olympia Quadrangle, 1937.

Olympia."[28] A restatement of several of these items is found in a document dated May 8, 1884.[29] It mentions that Camp #2 was the location of "One draft locomotive now used by Foster in the transport of logs and timber from lands owned by Charles Hanson to the west shore of Budd Inlet."

Another deed dated April 14, 1884 gives an account of the Percival Creek railroad about a year after the Tacoma Mill Company bought it. Therein, Charles Hanson sold a large number of personal properties and selected railroad spurs to his mill company. The list included timber on the northeast and southwest quarters, and the west half of the southeast quarter of the previously-mentioned Section 28. The document also describes the Percival Creek line: "Also another railroad commencing at Budd Inlet between Tumwater and Olympia, south of Percival Creek, running west from there one and three sevenths miles, and terminating in the northeast quarter of the southeast quarter of Section 28, T 18 N, R 2 W; also the graded roadbed of a length of about four seventh-miles

for a projected railroad not yet built but intended as an extension of the above railroad. Also, about one and one quarter-miles of skid road formerly used by George Foster in conjunction with his logging camp situated in Section 28."[30]

It must be noted that page 115 of *Gone, But Not Forgotten, Abandoned Railroads of Thurston County, Washington* states that a right-of-way located at 2549 Chapparel Drive was part of the mainline of a railroad that existed after 1885, the Black Lake & Sherman Valley Railroad. However, further examination of the data suggests that, in fact, the right-of-way found there was the graded, but not yet operating branch of Foster's Percival Creek railroad mentioned above, in the April 14, 1884 deed.

At some time in 1885, the Percival Creek railroad was no longer being used. Benjamin B. Turner made a successful attempt to wrest control of that right-of-way from the Tacoma Mill Company. Turner wished to use this pre-existing grade as part of his Black Lake & Sherman Valley Railroad, which soon would reach as far west as Black Lake.

FOSTER'S BUSH PRAIRIE RAILROAD

Perhaps Foster's biggest venture into railroad logging took place at Bush Prairie, south of Tumwater. The August 6, 1881 *Olympia Transcript* reports: "*Large Sale of Timber and Logging Camps*-We understand that Benjamin Turner sold on Thursday, to George H. Foster and the Tacoma Mill Company, all of his logging camps and timberlands and timber in this vicinity. The price paid is said to be $12,000. This includes several hundred acres of timber along the railroad [the Olympia & Chehalis Valley Railroad], his camp, oxen and all logging fixtures, the four logging cars, his old camp and timberland east of Tumwater, and the Warbass tract. The new firm will enlarge and continue the business as formerly. Two new logging cars will be added to the railroad line, making six in all, when it is expected that fifty thousand feet of logs will be brought out daily to tidewater."

The February 4, 1882 *Olympia Transcript* narrates: "The Olympia and Tenino road brings out cars one and a half miles, from the Deschutes River to the road, and then runs to this bay, five miles further. This is the well-known camp belonging to George Foster, who also employs a large force in cutting and barking the logs, and a number of teams in hauling the logs to the line of the railroad. Mr. Foster has a large body of fine timber in the region of his camp, sufficient to keep him for several years employed in the business." By April 1884, the railroad had reached as far east as Section 17 of Township 17 North, Range 1 West.

Figure 9 is a map showing Foster's Bush Prairie railroad. It was a narrow-gauge line, similar to the Olympia & Chehalis Valley Railroad, making it possible to haul loaded log cars all the way to a log dump on Budd Inlet. Camp #1 of this operation was sited in

the southwest quarter of the northwest quarter of Section 18, Township 17 North, Range 1 West.[31] The railroad probably had been abandoned by 1890, for there is no evidence that it was converted to standard-gauge that year, when the Port Townsend Southern Railroad took over the Olympia & Chehalis Valley Railroad and widened its gauge.

THE BLACK LAKE & SHERMAN VALLEY RAILROAD

By sometime in 1885, the Tacoma Mill Company had finished logging the timber obtained from George H. Foster, near Percival Creek. The railroad grade used in that operation was no longer used and its ownership had apparently reverted to the various prior grantors of the right-of-way. Benjamin Turner was able to secure that right-of-way and integrate it into his Black Lake & Sherman Valley Railroad which, later that year, was completed as far as the eastern shore of Black Lake. Turner was also able to lease the Tacoma Mill Company's log dump at Percival Point. His long-range plan was to extend his line to the Sherman Valley, southwest of Black Lake. But

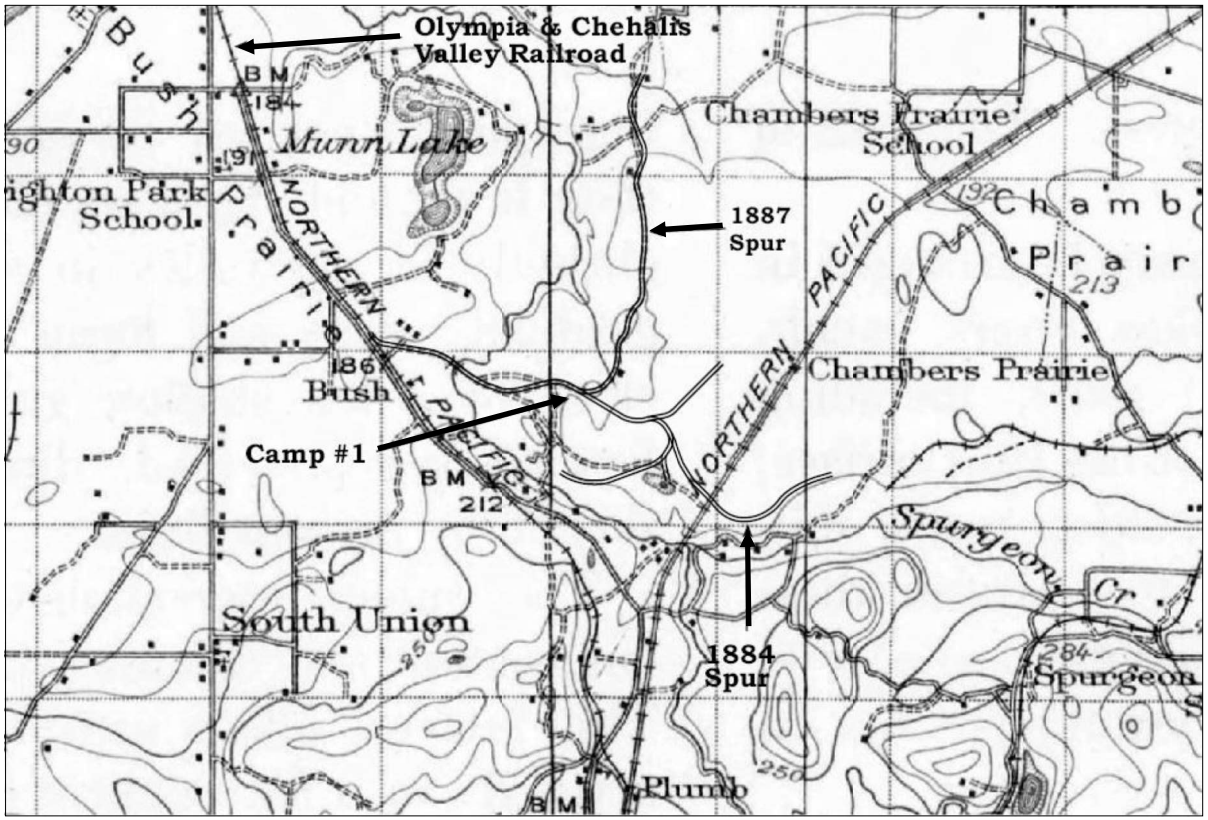


Figure 9. Author's map of Foster's Bush Prairie Railroad. Base map from U.S. Geological Survey Topographical Map of the Chehalis Quadrangle, 1916.

under Turner's ownership, the enterprise failed to turn a profit and the railroad never was lengthened beyond the lake.

Early on, Turner experienced a cash-flow crisis. In a series of mortgages in January, July, and September 1886, he mortgaged the entire logging operation, including the railroad between Percival Cove and Black Lake, to the Port Blakely Mill Company.[32] Those documents describe the Black Lake & Sherman Valley Railroad as 3.25 miles long, beginning at Budd Inlet in Section 22, Township 18, Range 2 West, and terminating on the shore of Black Lake, in Section 31. Lot 4 of Section 31 is the only part of Section 31 situated on the east side of Black Lake; therefore, it is the likely site of that terminal. Turner had purchased that lot from the Northern Pacific Railroad Land Company in September 1883.[33] However, Turner (without permission) built his railroad across Lots 1, 2 and 3 of Section 32 (to which he did not hold title) in order to reach the terminal at the lake.[34]

This resulted in several lawsuits which continued to be adjudicated even after Turner lost control of the Black Lake & Sherman Valley Railroad. The first was heard on July 5, 1887.[35] Therein, the heirs of Samuel Scott claimed that they were the rightful owners of Lot 4 in Section 31, and Lots 1, 2 and 3 in Section 32, all of which were in Township 18 North, Range 2 West. The declaration went on to say that "on or about the first day of May 1885 [the defendant] has constructed, maintained and operated upon and over the [above-described property] . . . his said railroad, and built . . . [three] rollways for logs . . . at points distant from one another–two on the west side of the said lake and one on the north end thereof–and many skid roads and logging roads, radiating from said rollways . . . That on 8 September 1886, these plaintiffs commenced . . . an action against said defendant to recover from him damages for his cutting . . . of such fir timber . . . in Lots 1, 2 and 3 and the south half of the southwest quarter of Section 31, all in Township 18 North, of Range 2 West [also several other parcels of property] . . . on the 18th day of June 1887, these plaintiffs obtained judgment in said action against said defendant for $1,000 damages . . . which judgment is still in force, unreversed, and unsatisfied."

The judgement handed down in that court case resulted in an order restraining Turner from cutting any timber whatsoever at Black Lake. John DeTiere was appointed receiver for the assets of Turner. He submitted a final receiver's report March 31, 1888. DeTiere noted that on July 1, 1887, he had made a contract with the Port Blakely Mill Company such that the mill company was allowed to carry out logging on Turner properties, to which it still held a mortgage. In addition, DeTiere leased the logging railroad to the mill company. The right-of-way was "out of repair" and required $713 to put it "in fair running order."[36]

After the receiver completed his work in March 1888, several details still re-

quired attention. On April 24, 1888, Turner deeded to William Renton (who owned the Port Blakely Mill Company) the real estate previously mortgaged to the mill company, as well as the 3.25-mile railroad.[37] A floating camp was included in the deed. It was located on a scow moored in Black Lake. The sale price was $1, suggesting that the document was made for the purpose of clarifying ownership of the properties. To further reinforce this, Turner changed the name of the Black Lake & Sherman Valley Railroad, while incorporating it (for the first time) on May 28, 1888. The new name was the Olympia, Black River, and Chehalis Railroad Company. The line was then formally sold to Renton on June 1, 1888.[38]

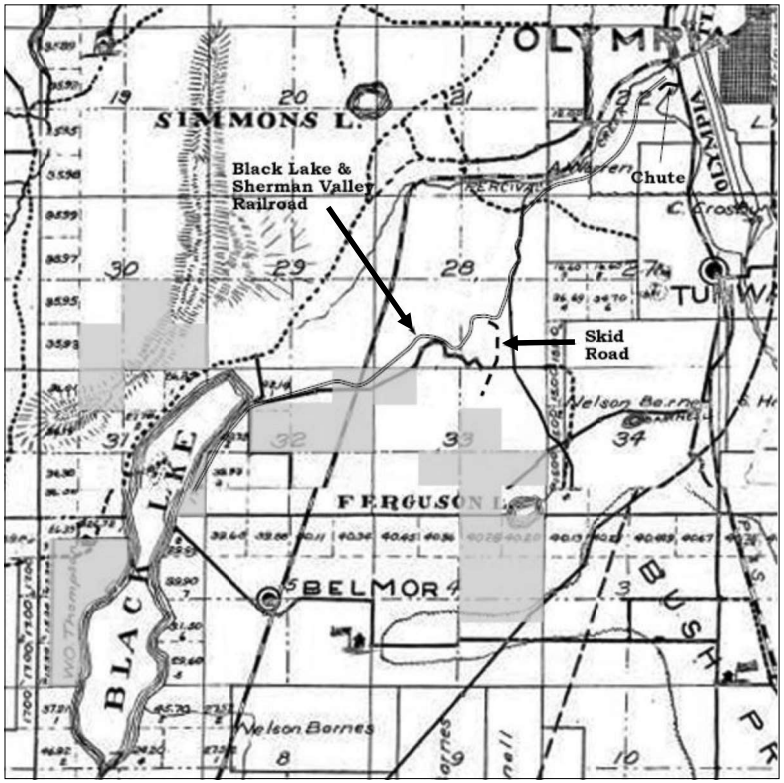


Figure 10. Author's route map of the Black Lake & Sherman Valley Railroad. Turner-owned timberland is shaded. 1909 base map, The County Engineer's New Road Map of Thurston County Washington.

Renton sent Sol Simpson to Olympia to look after Port Blakely interests while logging operations at Black Lake were winding down. *Logging to the Salt Chuck*, by Peter J. Replinger, reports that Simpson wrote to Renton on June 3, 1888, "Took possession of Black Lake Camp and railroad on June 1st. Put J. A. Cole in charge. Track very rough. Will take two to three hundred dollars to put in shape to operate the balance of the season." Replinger notes that on September 19, 1888, Simpson notified Renton that he had "Discharged men in camp on lake on the 16th." Thereafter, the railroad was removed.

Further insight into the location of this railroad, southwest of the log chute and a right-of-way leased from S. W. Percival, is found in a lease dated June 18, 1885.[39] Therein, Turner obtained permission from Charles Billings allowing him to use a right-of-way over the Alanson Warren Donation Claim, in Sections 22 and 27 of Township 18 North, Range 2 West.

The lease specifies that Turner's track was "to be constructed on or about the same line occupied by the road heretofore constructed over the said tract of land by George H. Foster."

South of the Warren Donation Claim, and Foster's abandoned logging camp #2, one questions why Turner chose not to follow Foster's pre-existing grade in the western half of Section 28. That right-of-way had been used to harvest Tacoma Mill Company timber. In theory, it should have been possible to extend it to Black Lake, if title to it could be secured. But, south of Foster's old camp, Turner decided to build his railroad over more challenging terrain. Perhaps he had the notion that later, a branch line could be constructed to timberland he controlled in Section 33, and farther south, in Section 4, Township 17 North, Range 2 West. Figure 10 illustrates some of the parcels controlled by Turner. The path of a possible skid road reaching Section 33 is visible.

A petition obtained from Thurston County Roads and Transportation Services helps locate Turner's grade farther southwest, in the south-central part of Section 28. Continuing study of this document has led to a revised opinion about the location of the Black Lake & Sherman Valley Railroad in this vicinity. The updated configuration differs from the one presented in *Gone, But Not Forgotten, Abandoned Railroads of Thurston County, Washington*. The petition was a request by W. L. Sapp and is dated October 7, 1898. Sapp and some of his neighbors desired to have a survey made for a road approximately 0.75-mile long "commencing at a point on the Sapp Road near the Benj. Turner R. Road trestle and running north on half section line [of Section 28], to intersect the county road direct from Tumwater to Mud Bay."

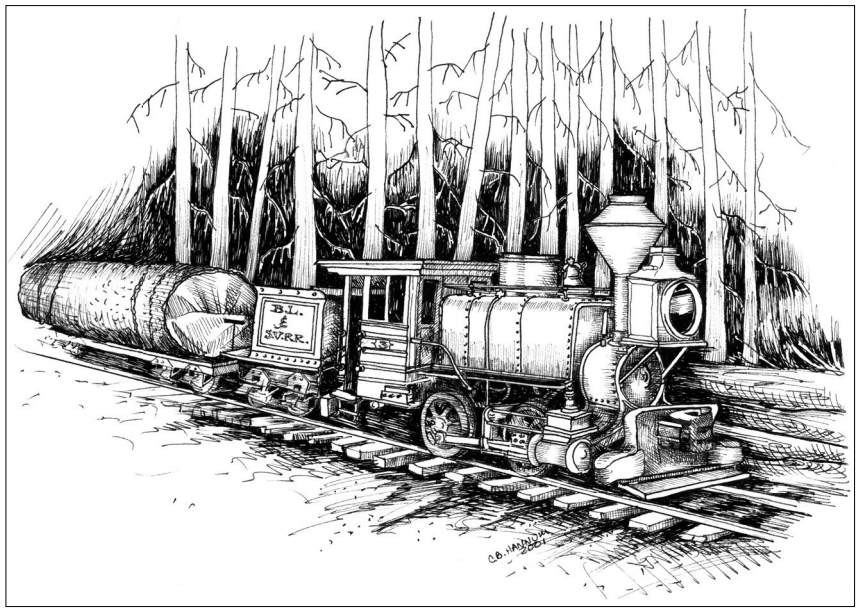
The survey was never made and that road was not built, but it seems clear that the "point on the Sapp Road near the Benj. Turner R. Road trestle" must have been immediately east of the intersection between Sapp Road SW and R. W. Johnson Boulevard. That area is precisely on the center line of Section 28. Sometime after 1969, Sapp Road was rebuilt in that locale. Now, it passes directly over a ravine, crossing the ravine on an area of fill. A present-day artist's conception shows the trestle as it would have appeared from the modern position of Sapp Road. The view is somewhat east of true north.

Although the identity of the earliest locomotive to operate over Turner's railroad remains unknown, a later one, Engine #3, still exists and has achieved relative fame. Built in 1870 by Smith & Porter for the Northern Pacific Railroad, it was designated #302 on that line. Turner acquired it in February 1886 and renumbered it as #3. With the rest of Turner's assets, it became the property of the Port Blakely Mill Company in 1888, where it continued to operate as #3. The accompanying drawing shows the locomotive as it would have appeared while operating on Turner's railroad.

The Turner trestle near Sapp Road. Artist's concept by Carol B. Hannum.

In 1895, the engine was sold to Polson Brothers Logging Company of Hoquiam, Washington, where it was renumbered as #1 and was in service until 1928. Subsequently, it was re-purchased by the Northern Pacific Railroad and restored to its original specifications. Re-named the "Minnetonka," the engine was exhibited at the 1939 World's Fair in New York City. Today it is on display at the Lake Superior Museum of Transportation in Duluth, Minnesota.

The year 1890 marked the end of an era when individual businessmen like Foster, Ellis, Brown, and Turner could build a personal logging empire in Thurston County. The local timber industry continued to thrive after that time. But as the 19th Century came to an end, the logging industry was controlled more and more by large corporate interests.



Black Lake & Sherman Valley Railroad engine #3, which later was renamed the "Minnetonka." Artist's concept by Carol B. Hannum.

NOTES

[1] George Foster, United States Census, 1860, *FamilySearch*, Massachusetts > Middlesex > Ward 1 Lowell > image 150 of 157.

[2] George H. Foster, 1870, U.S. Federal Census, Thurston County, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington State Archives, Digital Archives (http://digitalarchives.wa.gov : accessed February 22, 2020).

[3] George Henry Foster, Thurston County Pioneers, document #54, Washington Rural Heritage, Washington State Library (https://www.washingtonruralheritage.org/digital/collection/pioneers/id/276/rec/119 : accessed April 2, 2021).

[4] George Foster, United States Census, 1880, *FamilySearch*, Washington > Thurston > Olympia >ED15 > image 25 of 34.

[5] George Foster, Thurston County Auditor, Death Records, 1891-1907, Washington State Archives, Digital Archives (http://digitalarchives.wa.gov : accessed November 2, 2020).

[6] Isaac Chase "Ike" Ellis, Find A Grave (https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/91360904/isaac-chase-ellis : accessed April 4, 2021).

[7] *A Volume of Memoirs and Genealogy of Representative Citizens of the City of Seattle and County of King, Washington* (New York and Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1903), page 476.

[8] Amos Brown, 1870, U.S. Federal Census, King County, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington State Archives, Digital Archives (http://digitalarchives.wa.gov : accessed February 24, 2020).

[9] Amos Brown, 1880, Thurston County Census, Thurston County Territorial Auditor, Washington State Archives,

Digital Archives (http://digital archives.wa.gov : accessed April 2, 2021).

[10] Death Certificate of Benjamin B. Turner; death date January 22, 1923. Department of Health, Death Certificates, July 1, 1907 – December 31, 1995, Washington State Archives, Digital Archives (http://digitalarchives .wa.gov : accessed February 24, 2020).

[11] *Woodard Bay Natural Resources Conservation Area Management Plan* (Olympia: Washington State Department of Natural Resources, 2002), page 90.

[12] Thurston County District Court Case #2858, July 1889. All following Thurston County records can be found at the Southwest Regional Branch, Washington State Archives, Olympia, Washington.

[13] Thurston County, Washington, General Index Grantee, 1854-1889.

[14] Thurston County Miscellaneous Book 1, page 178.

[15] Thurston County Miscellaneous Book 1, page 179.

[16] Thurston County Miscellaneous Book 1, pages 287 and 289.

[17] South Bay logging bridge with mule team, photograph C1986.8.7, courtesy of Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma, Washington.

[18] Thurston County Miscellaneous Book 1, page 184.

[19] Thurston County Miscellaneous Book 1, page 191.

[20] Thurston County Miscellaneous Book 1, page 616.

[21] Thurston County Miscellaneous Book 1, page 601.

[22] James S. Hannum, *Gone, But Not Forgotten, Abandoned Railroads of Thurston County, Washington* (Olympia: Hannum House Publications, 2012), page 281.

[23] Thurston County Miscellaneous Book 1, page 385.

[24] Thurston County Deed Book 14, page 496.

[25] Thurston County Miscellaneous Book 1, page 557.

[26] Hannum, page 281.

[27] Thurston County Deed Book 13, page 30.

[28] Thurston County Miscellaneous Book 1, page 405.

[29] Thurston County Miscellaneous Book 1, page 552.

[30] Thurston County Deed Book 14, pages 740-748.

The rebuilt engine "Minnetonka" as it was readied for display in the 1939 World's Fair in New York City. Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

[31] Thurston County Miscellaneous Book 1, page 405.

[32] Thurston County Mortgage Book D, pages 108, 219, and 263; Chattel Mortgage Book 2, pages 262 and 349.

[33] Thurston County Deed Book 14, page 483.

[34] Thurston County, Second Judicial District Court, Case #2657.

[35] Thurston County, Second Judicial District Court, Case #2657.

[36] Hannum, page 114.

[37] Thurston County Deed Book 16, page 491.

[38] Thurston County Deed Book 16, page 491.

[39] Thurston County Deed Book 15, page 258.

Dr. Hannum is a retired physician and surgeon who spent his early years in Michigan. He arrived in western Washington in 1971 as a member of the U.S. Public Health Service. Railroad history has been a life-long interest, and he has written several books on the subject.